

HONORING MIKE COUCH FOR HIS CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SANTA BARBARA SCHOOL DISTRICT AND THE ENTIRE SANTA BARBARA COMMUNITY

### HON. LOIS CAPPS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 17, 2004

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to pay tribute to a very special person in the Santa Barbara community, Mike Couch, as he retires from the Santa Barbara School District after thirty-seven years. Mike Couch is more than a teacher, an advisor, a Principal or an Assistant Superintendent. He is a pillar of the Santa Barbara education community, a colleague and a friend.

Mike Couch began with the Santa Barbara School District as a social studies teacher at Santa Barbara High School, moving to Assistant Principal in 1989. In fact, while he was at Santa Barbara High, he was my daughter Laura's student government advisor. In talking to her about his retirement, she mentioned how she remembers fondly how "he monitored our elections, taught us parliamentary procedure and allowed us to be involved in the policies which governed the student life and Santa Barbara High School. Most importantly, he took us seriously; he fostered a commitment within me to be an active participant in the way our school was run which resulted in a longstanding engagement in political life beyond high school." Due in part to this mentoring, Laura has served in the White House, worked for a University and now is working on a Presidential campaign.

Mike Couch later moved on to be Principal of Dos Pueblos High School and then to serve as Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education for the Santa Barbara High School District. He taught for 22 years, first as an economics teacher when 30 students signed up for the newly offered class and there was nobody to teach it. His willingness to step into this assignment as a new teacher is indicative of the type of person that Mike Couch is. He is willing and able to step in and serve the school community and indeed the Santa Barbara community as a whole, in any role that is asked of him.

I am honored to have worked with Mike Couch over the years, and am so pleased by the positive affect that he has had not only on my daughter Laura, but also on so many students whose lives he has touched. I commend Mike Couch for his years and service and wish him well in his much-deserved retirement.

DARFUR: THE CRISIS CONTINUES

### HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 17, 2004

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, I would like to submit for the RECORD three recent articles regarding the ongoing crisis in Darfur, Sudan. I will continue to submit these accounts until the world takes notice. I will not let the world say "we did not know."

[From the BBC News]

#### SUDANESE CHILDREN DYING OF HUNGER

*Hundreds of children have started to starve to death in Sudan's war-torn western province of Darfur*

The BBC's Hilary Andersson saw the burial of two-year-old Ikram and says 400 other children in the same camp in Kalma were unable to keep food down.

Their families have fled attacks by pro-government Arab militias, accused of forcing black Africans off the land.

Last week, a senior aid worker said 300,000 people would starve in Darfur, even if help is sent immediately.

Some 10,000 have died in Darfur, since a rebellion broke out last year and one million have fled their homes.

The rains have already begun to fall, which will soon make Darfur, an area the size of France, virtually impassable, our correspondent says.

*'Too little'*

Speaking after his return from the area, UK Secretary for International Development Hilary Benn said Darfur was undoubtedly the largest humanitarian crisis in the world and more aid agencies were needed there.

"We are in a race against time in Darfur," he told MPs.

He admitted that the international response to the crisis had been too little, too late but said the UK was committed to doing all that it could.

"I have also been concerned about the adequacy and speed of the UN's response, although this should now change."

Our reporter in Darfur says that while Ikram died, another boy on the same mat, Joseph, could not be coaxed to eat.

His mother could do nothing but watch.

The mother of nine-month-old Adam says that she walked without food for 10 days to reach the camp. "The militias burnt our village . . . They were burning the children," she said.

Our correspondent says village after village in Darfur has been burnt, while food is running out in all the camps, where people have sought refuge.

#### Air-strikes

"If we get relief in, we could lose a third of a million. If we do not, it could be a million," Andrew Natsios, head of the U.S. Agency for International Development told a UN donor conference last week.

The figures were based on mortality and malnutrition rates, he said.

The government and two rebel groups have signed a ceasefire but the rebel Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) has accused the army and its militia allies of attacking them near the border with Chad earlier this week.

Jem official Abu Bakr Hamid al-Nur told Reuters news agency that the government had used an Antonov aircraft and helicopters to bomb the rebel positions.

[From the BBC NEWS]

#### SUDANESE TELL OF MASS RAPE

(By Alexis Masciarelli and Ilona Eveleens Darfur)

*The pro-government Janjaweed Arab militia has been accused of using systematic rape, as well as killing and destroying the villages of black Africans, in the conflict in Sudan's western Darfur region.*

Behind the closed door of a classroom, in the school compound where she has been living for the last two months, 35 year-old rape-victim Khadija, spoke of her ordeal.

"The Janjaweed arrived one evening in February in our village near Kaileck, they had guns," she says in a quiet voice.

"They followed us when we tried to escape. The group of people I was with was forced

back to Kaileck. They had surrounded the whole town."

"They separated men and women. Then the Janjaweed selected the prettiest women."

"Four men raped me for 10 days."

"Every day, women were picked up, taken to the bush where they were raped and brought back to Kaileck. The next day it would start again."

#### Hostage population

Khadija is one of some 40,000 people to have found shelter in the town of Kass, in the south of Darfur.

In the past 16 months, the conflict opposing the Sudan government and its militia allies to the rebels of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), has killed at least 10,000 people and displaced more than one million across the large western Sudanese region.

"Rape appears to be a feature of most attacks in Fur, Masalit, and Zaghawa areas of Darfur," says the latest Human Rights Watch report on the Darfur conflict.

"The extent of the rape is difficult to determine since women are reluctant to talk about it and men, although willing to report it, speak only in generalities."

Many witnesses say the population of Kaileck was held hostage by the Janjaweed for two months, despite repeated appeals to the commissioner of Kass.

Men were also picked up daily and killed.

The accounts are difficult to verify, but accord with the findings of human rights workers in recent months.

Kaileck is now an empty desolated town, with every single house and hut burnt or destroyed.

#### Ethnic choice

"It is very difficult for me as I am a Fur woman and these are Arab men", says Khadija, covering herself with an orange scarf.

"These are my only clothes. My sister gave them to me, because the Janjaweed abandoned me naked."

"Now I am three-months pregnant. It will be a child from the Janjaweed. But I won't reject this baby. He will be my baby."

"When he grows up, he will decide whether he wants to be a Fur or an Arab. If he chooses to be an Arab, he could go with them. If he decides to be a Fur, he will be welcome to stay with us."

In the same classroom, a much younger woman listens.

Fifteen-year-old Aziza says she was also raped by the Janjaweed back in February.

"When Kaileck was attacked, I fled towards the mountains, but five horsemen caught me and took me far away in a field," she says.

"All five of them raped me twice. They kept me for 10 days. They whipped me."

"I could not say anything because they were armed. All I could do was to cry."

"They tied up my arms and my legs and would only release me when they raped me. They called me Abeid (slave in Arabic)."

"Eventually they abandoned me. Someone told my mother where I was and she came to take me back. I could not walk by myself."

#### Pain

But the ordeal did not stop then.

"When I arrived in Kaileck, I learnt that the Janjaweed had killed my father."

"I am still in pain and I can't really control myself. But I have not seen any doctor."

In Kass, like many other towns and camps in Darfur, women are still at the risk of being raped when they go out to gather firewood or fetch water.

Their best protection, they say, does not come from the army or local police force, but by going in large groups which are more able to defend themselves.